



Walking the Talk of Presuming Competence

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“What I have come to understand, is that a presumption of competence is much more than a set of beliefs, **it is a way of interacting** with another human being who is seen as a true equal and as having the same basic human rights as I have. “

Ariane Zurcher, 2013, Emma's Hopebook


<https://emmashopebook.com/2013/03/07/presume-competence-what-does-that-mean-exactly/>

“Presume competence means – assume your child is aware and able to understand even though they may not show this to you in a way that you are able to recognize or understand.

Presume competence means talk to your child or the other person as you would a same age non-Autistic child or person.”

Ariane Zurcher, 2013, Emma's Hopebook

<https://emmashopebook.com/2013/03/07/presume-competence-what-does-that-mean-exactly/>



Presume Competence is a
“practice”. Much like anything I
want to get good at, I must
practice this. It is very much an
action.

<https://emmashopebook.com/2013/05/22/taking-action-presuming-competence/>

UN S P O K E N

A groundbreaking point-of-view documentary exploring a non-fluent speaker's world. 14-year-old Emma challenges societal judgements surrounding autism...
one keystroke at a time.

This is Emma's debut as co-director.



<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/unspoken-documentary>

Changing attitudes and assumptions
towards the practice of the
presumption of competence

Labels



“Fastening labels on people is like leasing cars with the destinations determined beforehand.”



“Its attitudes more that limit opportunities rather than the disability itself. Larry likes people to see him first as primarily an artist instead of autistic man and Tracy wants you to see him as leading man who gets the girl like George Clooney.”



“Labeling creates exclusion so asserting the talents of people over their label promotes their inclusion.”



“You can be a poet, painter, athlete or reality TV addict but whatever your passion is that should define you.”

Redefining how intelligence is seen



AAC

Perception drives expectation.
Expectation drives opportunity.
Opportunity drives achievement.
Achievement drives perception.

<http://praacticalaac.org/practical/perception-and-presuming-competence/>



“If you want to see competence,
it helps if you look for it.”

Doug Biklen

Least dangerous assumption



“Unless someone makes a jump by going outside the handicapped person’s previous stage of communication, there is no way the speechless person can do so. Failure is no crime. Failure to give someone the benefit of the doubt is.”

Anne McDonald, *Annie's Coming Out*, 1980



Expanding how we think
about communication

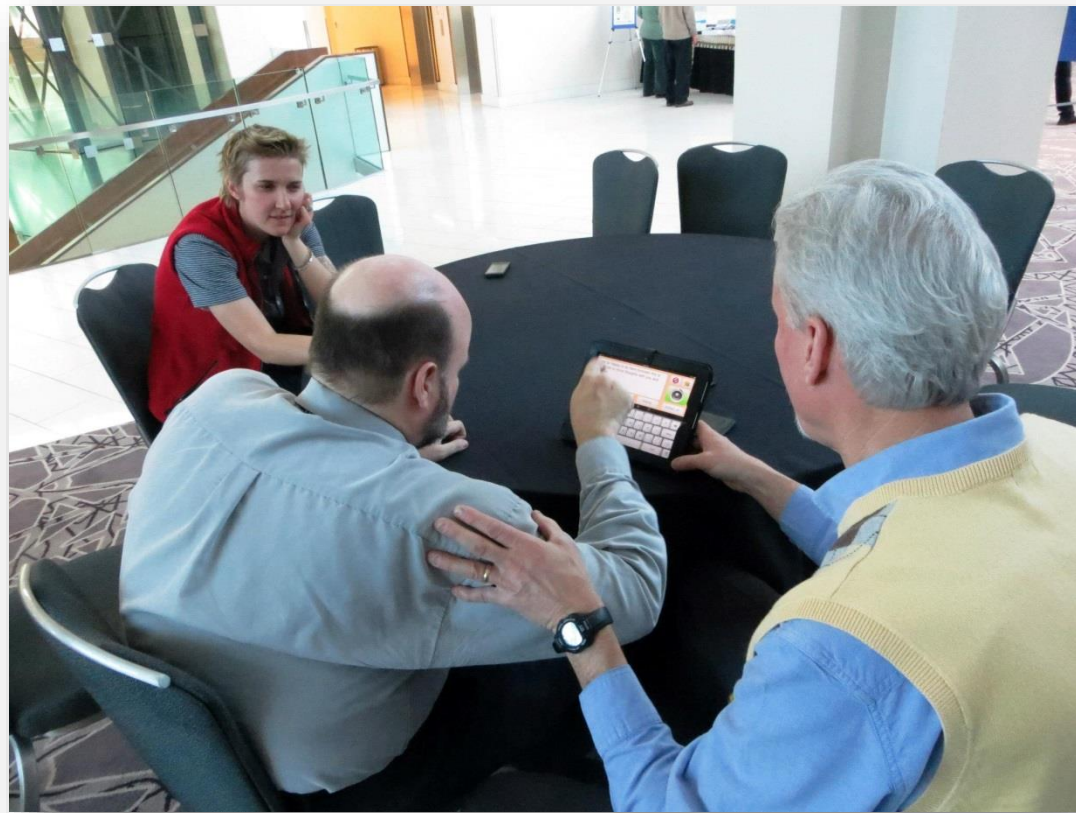


“All People Want Communication”

“Populate my day with opportunities
for communication.”

Larry Bissonnette





“The power of communication is rooted in relationships... I want social contact, relationship, and conversation...I want to be in the mix...ask me enticing questions.”

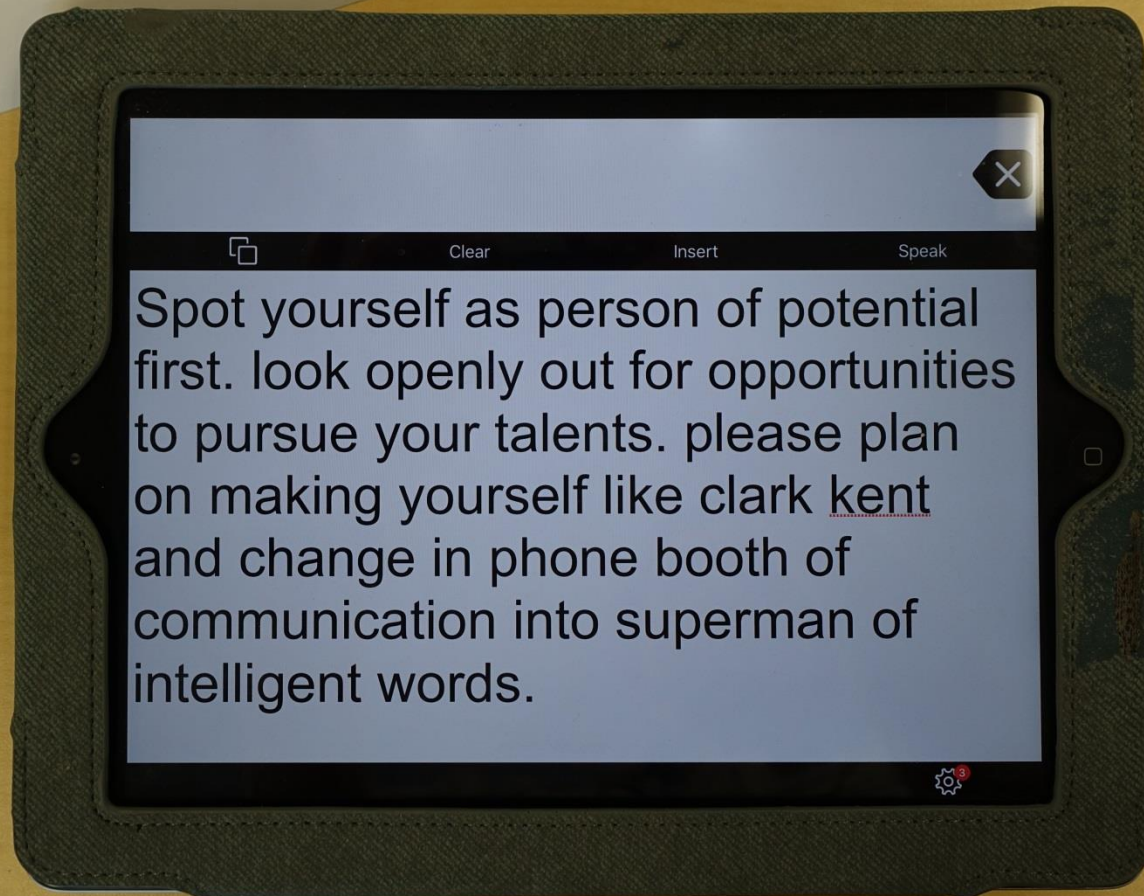
“With time and patience I can have some really thoughtful conversations. What works for me is communicating with thinking, patient people who understand my autism and work through the problems of anxiety and impulsive movement to focus on thoughtful communication.”





Creating a culture of “presuming competence”

Larry





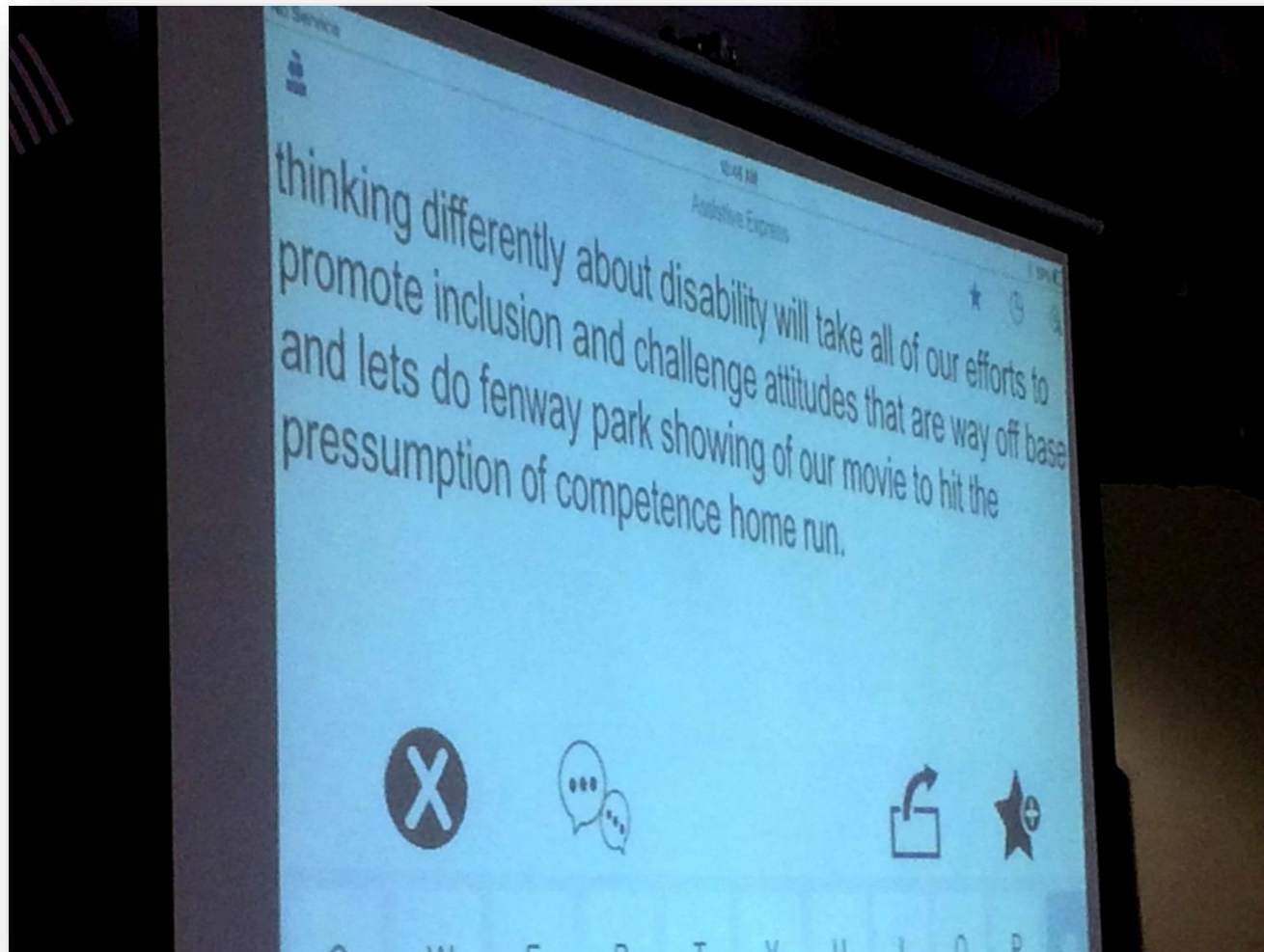
Public education



University of Vermont Medical Center 2018 Communication Expo



Going out to schools



Film screenings and presentations



For further reading:

Kathie Snow “Eliminating the Presumed Incompetence Paradigm”
(www.disabilityisnatural.com)

- Providers and consumers
- Service provider is the “answer”
- Create, operate, fund segregated system of services, programs, activities
- Minimal focus on inclusion